

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Santa Ana Region

July 14, 2006

STAFF REPORT

ITEM: * 10

SUBJECT: Appeal for an Exemption from the 30 Percent Maximum Slope Requirement for the Use of a Subsurface Disposal System – Larry Bischof, Lot 12, Crestview Drive, Idyllwild Area, Riverside County, APN 565-242-012

DISCUSSION:

On May 26, 2005, Larry Bischof, on behalf of Hilltop Realty, submitted a request to construct a home on a 0.21-acre parcel utilizing an on-site septic tank-subsurface disposal system in the Idyllwild area of Riverside County. The owner proposes to construct a house on the property. There is no sewer available that could service the lot.

Idyllwild is a mountainous area of the region. The lot has relatively steep slopes and the slope in the disposal area is approximately 38 percent. This slope meets Riverside County Department of Environmental Health guidelines; however, it does not comply with the Board's guidelines.

In 1979, the Regional Board adopted "*Guidelines for Sewage Disposal from Land Developments*." These guidelines established minimum criteria for the use of individual disposal systems to prevent pollution or nuisance from discharges to leaching or percolation systems. These guidelines stipulate, in part, that "*Natural or finished ground slope in the disposal area shall not be greater than 30 percent.*" When slopes in the disposal area are greater than 30 percent, the probability of sanitary wastes surfacing is much greater, thereby creating a threat of nuisance, pollution, and public health hazard.

At the time they were adopted, the Board's "*Guidelines*" were consistent with those implemented by both the Riverside and San Bernardino County Health Departments. However, both Counties have since updated their requirements. Both health departments now allow the installation of septic systems in areas of up to 45 percent slope, provided certain conditions are met (e.g., the greater the slope, the deeper the leach lines must be installed).

Mr. Bischof is unable to find a suitable location on the property for the disposal system with less than 38 percent slope. Therefore, he is appealing to the Board for an exemption to place the proposed system in an area between 30 and 45 percent slope (38 percent slope).

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Mr. Bischof's request for an exemption for this project for the use of an individual sewage disposal system, provided that the property owner(s) obtain approval for the subsurface disposal system from Riverside County Environmental Health.

Comments were solicited from the following agencies

State Water Resources Control Board, Office of Chief Counsel – Jorge Leon
Riverside County Environmental Health – Sam Martinez
Riverside County Environmental Health, Indio Office – Mark Abbott
Riverside County Building and Safety – Steve Dondalski
Inland Foundation Engineering, Inc. – Mark Strahm